

For Immediate Release
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**GENERAL ASSEMBLY PASSES LEGISLATION BLOCKING
LAWSUITS AGAINST FOOD INDUSTRY IN MISSOURI**

JEFFERSON CITY -- On Tuesday, the Missouri General Assembly approved a bill that would prevent lawsuits from being filed against Missouri's restaurants and others in the food industry.

Sen. Chuck Gross, R-St. Charles, served as the Senate handler for House Bill 1115, which will now be sent to the governor to be signed into law.

"Rather than take personal responsibility, people may file lawsuits for overeating," said Gross. "People shouldn't be able to finger the food industry for an expanding waistline. Instead they need to look in the mirror and blame only themselves."

HB 1115 will prohibit civil lawsuits against manufacturers, distributors and sellers of food for any claims arising out of weight gain, obesity or health conditions associated with weight gain or obesity.

Only a few lawsuits against fast-food giants have been brought so far, and none have been successful.

"So far no lawsuit of this type has been filed in Missouri, and we want to make certain that none ever will be," Gross said.

In the best-known lawsuit of this type, a federal judge in New York last year dismissed a lawsuit filed against McDonald's on behalf of two overweight teenagers that contended the company was hiding the health risks of Big Macs and Chicken McNuggets. U.S. District Judge Robert W. Sweet said it was well-known that fast food contains high levels of potentially harmful ingredients such as fat and salt.

“It’s only common-sense that if a person eats greasy fast-food two or three times a day and never exercises, then they will probably be not only overweight, but also unhealthy,” said Gross. “Eating fast food is a lifestyle choice, not a legal matter.”

Provisions of this measure go into effect Jan. 1, 2005, and will apply only to claims pending or filed after that date.